The Builder.

No. CCCCLVIII.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 1851.

THE inhabitants of Portsmouth, grateful to Lord Frederick Fitzclarence for his efforts towards the improvement of the town, have determined to offer him a testimonial; and it is suggested that this shall take the shape of a statue, column, or fountain, erected on the spot where his Lordship's endeavours have been made. Let us caution them against the *statue*, if they wish to see Lord Frederick amongst them again, for the chances are that they will put up something which will drive him for ever from the spot. There is much wisdom in the objection to raising statues to a living man, not merely on the ground that you cannot tell what he may do before he dies to render such an undisguisable public testimony in his honour undesirable, but because of the difficulty which, from some cause or other, we find in putting up a statue satisfactory even to the individual honoured. And yet we have sculptors of great ability,—very great ability; but by some means or another our public statues are usually public failures. Either the right man is not chosen; or, being chosen, is not successful; or, being successful, has his work spoilt by position. Look at that monstrous eyesore, the "Duke," on the arch at Hyde-park Corner! A work with qualities, limited they may be, to command admiration; but so placed that only its weaknesses and defects can be observed. Here we have thirty thousand pounds' worth of skill and metal; *thirty thousand pounds' worth!* and yet Barry (we mean the clown), when he puts on a short cloak and cocked hat, and bestrides a little pony in the ring at Astley's, with his hand stuck out, is unable to produce a more ridiculous figure than this presents, when seen from the north or south, though he tries his hardest; and Barry is a great genius in his way, and a very funny fellow.

The Duke is very unlucky in his untrue effigies; notwithstanding Chantrey's fine work before the Royal Exchange: witness the tame, common statue of him set up at the Tower of London,—a statue guiltless of a thought, and effective only in exciting regret.

The statue of the Queen in the 'Change is not satisfactory; the pig-tailed George III. is not pleasant to rest upon; and George IV. in Trafalgar-square, one of our best, looks very much as if he were taking the old horse, which Chantrey made play many parts, to water.

But what shall we say of the statues which the people of Portsmouth already have, and owe, we believe, to the liberality of the nobleman they desire to honour? It was the recollection, indeed, of these that prompted our prefatory caution. When the statue of the Duke of Wellington was first erected there we drew attention to a startling piece of bad taste exhibited in it, and this was ultimately obliterated.* But there still stands the statue, and unluckily it is not "the statue that enchants the world." It is not merely indifferent or common, but it is positively bad—to the tutored eye painful,—and as art-culture spreads in Portsmouth so will the desire for the removal of that and its melancholy companion increase, until it culminate in their abasement. Some of our recent foreign visitors gazed on them wonderingly, and well they might.

The Rutland statue, we observe, is about to be erected; and here again, we have, unfortunately, a failure. Most of our readers will remember the strange, loose figure of the Duke in the Great Exhibition: it stood in the west nave. His Grace is made to appear positively intoxicated; and we may expect, if it be put up without alteration, to find the old proverb of "as drunk as a lord" giving place in Leicester to "as drunk as the Duke." It is really too serious a matter, however, to joke about. There appears to be a desire in Leicester to emulate the people of Chelmsford, who have put the statue of Tindal on the pump; but their decisions on this head we have not yet heard. After obtaining a statue for a place, the next important thing is to obtain a proper place for the statue.*

As we are speaking of sculptors, we may mention that Mr. Weekes has been elected an Associate of the Academy.† Mr. Behnes has just now completed a colossal bust of the Duke of Wellington for the King of Prussia. The statue of the late Lord George Bentinck has been placed upon the pedestal in Cavendish-square; but is at present covered up. The figure is of bronze, the pedestal red granite. The deceased statesman is represented in a surtout, with a cloak upon his shoulders, and holds in his right hand raised to his breast a roll of paper. We may add to these sculptural notices that Mr. Wyatt's equestrian statues of the Queen and Prince Albert, which were at the Great Exhibition, have been obtained by the spirited proprietor of the Colosseum, and now stand at the entrance to that building.

An American correspondent of ours is very angry with the Royal Commissioners for not giving Mr. Power a council medal for his "Greek Slave;" but we are unable to participate in his anger, charming as the statue is. The Fine-Art Jury, No. XXX., have made some grievous mistakes; but we cannot put this amongst them.‡

The statue of William the Conqueror, which was raised last month in his birth-place, Falaise, in Normandy, has had much applause for eccentric beauty, and has gained for its author, M. Rochet, much reputation. The warrior-king uttering a furious shout, with his banner in his hand, is galloping to the attack. Horse and man are in violent action: repose, so necessary in monumental sculpture, is wholly wanting, and the mind seeks in vain a resting-place. It is, nevertheless, a fine work, displaying knowledge and originality.

O! pleasant Falaise, noted now, too, for thy rocks and night-caps,—well do we remember fruitful rambles in thy neighbourhood in early days, when leisure came oftener than now.

> "Reclining on thy rocks, Falaise,
> That front thy still majestic towers,
> Ah me! what dreams of other days
> Shed glory on the passing hours!
> The window'd keep, the yawning breach,
> Moss-mantled vault and chiming bell,
> Crenelle, crag, moat, and dungeon, each
> Had some old feudal tale to tell."

The Castle magnificently placed; the window whence Robert of Normandy might first have seen the maid Arlette; the little uncomfortable chamber in which William *may* have been born; the old house in the market-place, inscribed *Maison de Guillaume le Grand Conquérant Richard. Donne à boire et à manger*;—all come vividly back to the memory.

What inference do we draw from what we have been saying? That to produce an unimpeachable statue demands abilities of the highest order, and that these abilities, when exhibited, should be duly honoured.

MINERAL PRODUCTS RELATING TO THE BUILDING ARTS IN CLASS I. OF THE GREAT EXHIBITION.*

No. 185 contained specimens of stone from the quarries of the Duke of Leeds at Anston, whence a large proportion of the stone used for the new Houses of Parliament has been procured. The commissioners in their report recommended the stone of Bolsover Moor, in Derbyshire, but it was soon found that the quarries there would not furnish a sufficient supply. In consequence of this the contractor resorted to Anston, about fourteen miles farther north, where the stone is of the same or perhaps a better quality, and the quarries are situate close to the Chesterfield Canal, which gives them the advantage of cheap water carriage all the way to London. The blocks exhibited by Mr. Grissell from Anston are favourable specimens of a light yellowish or ferruginous brown: the stone is capable of being sawn into slabs, and of being worked into heraldic and other ornaments and devices, the edges and angles being fine and perfect. The price of the Bolsover Moor stone is quoted by the commissioners at 2s. per foot in London, which seems exceedingly low, as this stone had to be carried eight miles by land; and 10d. per foot the price at the quarry

* The Duke was represented trampling under foot the Gallic cock.

* We hear from Leicester, by the way, that some fine Roman pavements have been discovered in an orchard close to the town. The pavements are but 1 to 2 feet below the surface, and the discoverers expected, when our informant wrote, to expose the entire ground plan of a villa.

† There were three other vacancies; these were filled by the election of Mr. Bonall, Mr. E. W. Cooke, and Mr. F. Stone.

‡ A German writer on art has the following novel remarks on the Greek Slave:—There can be no doubt that the *American* intended by his statue to aim a little blow at us Eastern Caucasians. A Greek slave, forsooth! why, a Circassian or Georgian would have done as well. Still, there is a certain delicate virginity expressed in this marble which is truly Greek; in a Circassian or Georgian, the whole gait would have been different. Leaving this political question out of the question, we say, that any great art-work ought to impress on and stand inquiry, reflection, thought, &c. Now, it strikes us, that the fetters which the Greek female wears could not be supposed to have been where they are now *when* she was dressed. Either she was unfettered when in her attire, or the shackles must have been first removed, and *then* put on *again*. What necessity or propriety there be to fetter a female, in fact, any person, when in a state of nudity, we are not well able to guess: there is something absolutely unwarrantable, gratuitous, and, we would in *this* case say, indelicate, in such a procedure. It is a different case with Andromeda, or the like mythological personages, who are supposed to have been unattired, chained for some or other purpose. But, we repeat, it will always be a drawback on the American Venus of Medicis, that her composer should have *fettered* her, and thus put fetters on the feeling and thought-expansion of the beholder.

* See p. 653, *ante*. A correspondent from Liverpool, "J. A. P.," who comments on our description of the magnesian limestone as extending on the southern and western sides of the Lancashire coal-field, by Newton, Liverpool, Ormskirk, and Preston, has applied too strict and technical a reading to a description which was intended merely as a general indication of the range of certain lower members of the new red sandstone, which usually contain beds of magnesian limestone. Phillips, in his "Geology," mentions the magnesian limestone as occurring near Manchester; and our correspondent himself describes it as occurring in detached masses on the eastern outcrop of the Lancashire coal measures. On Greenough's geological map the same colouring as in the neighbourhood of Manchester is extended round the coal-field by all the places mentioned above. If our correspondent knows from actual acquaintance with the country on the southern and western sides of the coal district, that the magnesian limestone is not there worked for economic purposes, this is a proposition which we should have no great difficulty in admitting. We need not tell him, however, that the magnesian limestone may be represented by yellow marls or by yellow arenaceous beds by no means suitable for the purposes to which magnesian limestone is usually applied. Our correspondent laments jokingly that his neighbours have been sending into Wales and Derbyshire for a supply of limestone in ignorance of the fact that it was lying at their own doors. It is probable, however, that even if beds of magnesian limestone should be met with in this district, it would only be in the shape of a very inferior building stone, and it would probably be unfit for burning into lime, either to make mortar or for agricultural purposes.

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